

July, 1983  
No. 84



## What's Inside?

Meet Your Neighbor

Coit Tower Anniversary

Street Patrols Resume

SF Urban Fair

# TELEGRAPH HILL SEMAPHORE

*Publication of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers*

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## President's Message

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Our membership has now grown to over 500 strong—thanks in large part to the efforts of our recent Financial Secretary/Membership Chairperson, Virginia Sletteland.

With a membership this large, it is impossible to contact personally all of our members who are interested in special activities and committees. To keep track, all members are asked to fill out a membership card when they join THD, and the information provided there is passed on to the appropriate committee chairperson.

As a group, we are constantly faced with community problems that tax the abilities of our committee chairpersons. We are *all* volunteers—many of us have full-time jobs and many have families—and often it is simply expedient to shoulder the responsibility for an emergency rather than involve other members and volunteers. Although this solves the problem, it tends to involve only a small portion of our membership. Many who would like to become more actively involved are overlooked. On the other hand, in support of our committee chairpersons, they often have called the people on their lists and have found them impossible to reach or “too busy right now” and thus unable to help.

One of my goals for this next year is to get “new” people involved in the organization. If you have never been contacted to serve on a committee, please call the chairperson on page 2 of the *Semaphore*. If your project does not fit into a defined committee, please let me or one of the other board members know.

With your help and cooperation, our experience this year will be gratifying and rewarding for us both individually and collectively as Telegraph Hill Dwellers.

## THD OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS



### OFFICERS:

President	*Jane Winslow . . . . .	396 Lombard	421-1466
Vice President	*Judy Robinson . . . . .	562B Lombard	982-8533
Recording Secretary	Nan Roth. . . . .	2017 Grant	397-2176
Corresponding Secretary	Jeanne Milligan . . . . .	486 Union	989-0494
Treasurer	*Herb Zelinsky. . . . .	152 Lombard	982-0269
Financial Secretary	Rhoda Robinson . . . . .	276 Francisco	781-5221
Historian	Nancy Katz . . . . .	2 Whiting	986-1890
Editor— <i>Semaphore</i>	Lynne Burwell . . . . .	.321 Chestnut	982-9715
*denotes Executive Committee			

### DIRECTORS, 1983-1985:

Bob Armstrong . . . . .	462 Vallejo	398-8849
*Jerry Lubenow . . . . .	300 Lombard	981-8279
Bob Tibbits . . . . .	.386 Chestnut	986-7227
Jack Moss . . . . .	265 Telegraph Hill	781-4077

### DIRECTORS, 1983-1984:

*Greg Jones . . . . .	58 Edgardo Place	986-6412
Herb Kosovitz. . . . .	.340 Chestnut	398-0757
Virginia Sletteland. . . . .	448 Greenwich	781-4352
Lee England. . . . .	.27 Alta	362-3891
Ex Officio Jerry Petruzzelli . . . . .	288 Union	397-6043

### STANDING COMMITTEES:

Budget	Herb Zelinsky. . . . .	152 Lombard	982-0269
Membership	Rhoda Robinson. . . . .	276 Francisco	781-5221
Program	Lee England. . . . .	.27 Alta	362-3891
<i>Semaphore</i>	Lynne Burwell . . . . .	.321 Chestnut	982-9715

### SPECIAL COMMITTEES:

Planning and Zoning	Judy Robinson . . . . .	562B Lombard	982-8533
Landmarks	Nan Roth. . . . .	2017 Grant	397-2176
Waterfront	Bob Katz . . . . .	2 Whiting	986-1890
Parks and Trees	Jerry Lubenow . . . . .	300 Lombard	981-8279
Crime Prevention	Dan DuPort . . . . .	.40 Edith	397-9148
	Tom Havey . . . . .	.529 Vallejo	391-5524
Parking	Nancy Katz . . . . .	2 Whiting	986-1890
Movies	Margaret Gwathmey. . . . .	.273 Green	982-4221
Neighborhood Liaison	Bob Tibbits . . . . .	.386 Chestnut	986-7227
Social	Jeanne Milligan . . . . .	486 Union	989-0494
	Virginia Sletteland. . . . .	448 Greenwich	781-4352

MEMBERS: Please call these chairs and volunteer to serve today!

## MEETING WITH NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORS AND MERCHANTS

At the June 8th meeting of the North Beach Merchants and Professionals Association, Marsha Cowen, President of the North Beach Neighbors, proposed that the group discuss developing a coalition of concerned groups in our area to address problems of vagrancy and sanitation. At her invitation, representatives of the Park Health and Police Departments were among those present.

We were alerted to the services of the Sheriff's S.W.A.P. (San Francisco Sheriff's Work Alternative Program), which allows minor offenders to work off weekend sentences by removing litter and graffiti under the supervision of deputy sheriffs. Call 864-WORK for information.

We were reminded that it is required by law to have trash and garbage service at all dwelling units. Non-compliance is a misdemeanor. Any "suspicious" (that is non-conforming) buildings or persons are checked out by the Health Department and can be prosecuted for leaving household trash on the streets. It is up to *all neighbors* to help observe and report offenses. Call 558-4731 or 558-4057.

The police do not want to be blamed for harassment and indicated that written community support is required if vagrants and panhandlers are to be picked up.

At the same meeting, the Merchants, who desperately need parking, proposed a three-story, three-hundred car, elevator-operated garage for the Vallejo St./Churchill Alley location, with the site leased from the owner, built by the Parking Authority, and operated by the present garage operator, with a mini-park on the roof. Perhaps this is a parking solution that will please everyone.



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**CAPTURE THE MAGIC AND  
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The city's second annual San Francisco Fair & Exposition will be held at the Moscone Center July 28-31. THD applied for a booth and was selected, along with 24 other groups, to be part of the neighborhood section.

The entire Moscone Center will be jammed for the event with 500 booths and exhibits. The Fair will celebrate the life and history of San Francisco with a galaxy of entertainment, competitions, food and drinks, and mini-festivals. Among the attractions will be an outdoor carnival, 60 hours of music on stage, a video games arcade, arts and crafts demonstrations, an urban history project, and gourmet food from twenty-five of the city's great restaurants.

The neighborhood exhibits, underwritten by Chevron's \$10,000 contribution for booths and seminars, will highlight unique features of San Francisco's diverse residential communities. The THD booth will be located in the Cable Car Neighborhood as part of a joint participation with North Beach Neighbors, the North Beach Association of Merchants and Professionals, Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center, the Chinatown Neighborhood Improvement Resource Center, and Nob Hill Neighbors.

Under the theme "Love thy neighborhood," each group's exhibit will be spread around a restored cable car that has been graciously donated by the Public Utilities Commission. Plans are being made to feature a cable car bell ringing contest each day of the Fair. Celebrity bell ringers will be invited for the final contest on the closing Sunday. T-shirt and bumper sticker sales, children's games, raffles, and other activities will raise funds to support individual neighborhood causes.

Although THD did not enter the first Fair last year, we were invited by Marsha Cowen, President of North Beach Neighbors, to participate with other groups from the northern quadrant of the city. Richard Perri (441-1428 or 981-7220) of the Neighbors is chairman of the joint project. If you have any ideas for booth activities or publicity, get in touch with your THD representatives, Bob Tibbits (772-4691 or 986-7227) or Peter Dewees (469-1371 or 981-1894). Volunteers will be needed to work four-hour shifts manning the booth each 10-hour day, Thursday through Sunday. Let's make this first participation, in what promises to be an annual event, a real success—get involved, celebrate, and have some fun. Love thy neighborhood!

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

### MOTIONS PASSED—March 15, 1983

To keep \$10,000 in the money market fund until the Board recommends an alternative investment.

To contribute \$250 to support 1000 Montgomery Street tenants' suit.

To oppose a financial institution at Green/Stockton Streets location by any means available to us.

To actively support the Dorothy Erskine Memorial Tree Fund proposal.

### MOTIONS PASSED—May 17, 1983

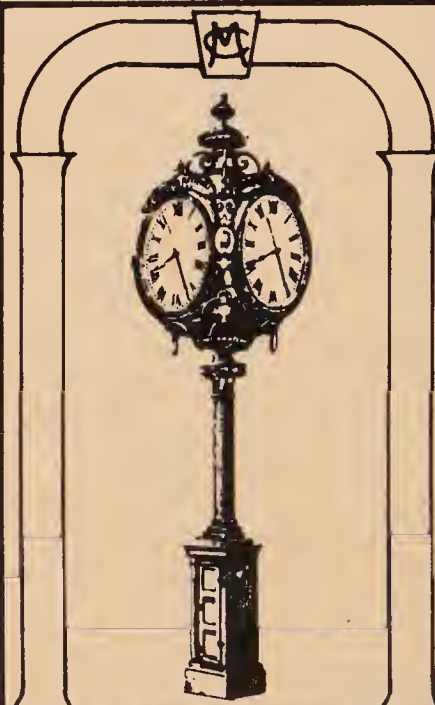
To endorse the SF Planning Initiative and contribute \$250 to the cause, with the condition that THD be represented on the steering committee.


To contribute \$500 to the Dorothy Erskine Memorial Tree Fund.

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## DEVELOPER PUTS SQUEEZE ON NEIGHBOR

The granting of a rear yard and height variance to the new owner of 208 Francisco Street, a well-placed local developer, has left many neighbors dismayed. The lot is surrounded by buildings with little or no rear yards—a condition that would appear to more than justify the enforcement of the required minimum 15-foot rear yard setback. Instead, the zoning administrator cited small lots and high lot coverage as part of the "charm" of the neighborhood. The result of this decision will be substantial loss of sunlight for a neighbor who already gets little or no sun due to overdevelopment of adjacent lots.

THD and several concerned neighbors appeared before the Board of Permit Appeals in an effort to get the Planning Department's decision overruled. However, the Board voted 3 to 1 to uphold the DCP despite a carefully documented rebuttal to the DCP findings that included data proving that the applicant would *still* be able to develop his property to a degree comparable with his neighbors even without the variance.

Given the frequency with which the DCP is granting such variances on our Hill, it would appear that the right to light, air, privacy, and safety from fire (on which such code requirements are based) does not apply to Telegraph Hill residents. Charming little cottages with high lot coverage have far less impact on their neighbors than 40 foot high structures with little or no rear yard. The residents of the Richmond and other neighborhoods rebelled under such conditions bringing about citywide residential downzoning in 1979—a reform that the



Department of City Planning seems determined to see that we not share in. Let us hear your suggestions for reversing this trend.

### S.F. PLANNING INITIATIVE

The San Francisco Planning Initiative (aka The San Francisco Plan), petitions for which are now in circulation, has three purposes. It would require that the City Planning Commission "adopt in one action a revised and complete Master Plan" by November 1, 1984. It would also require that by March 1, 1984, the Board of Supervisors enact "all necessary ordinances and other measures" relating to the construction and/or rehabilitation of affordable housing and for all permit holders of developments to pay for the costs of additional MUNI services generated by their projects. In addition, by November 1, 1984, the Board of Supervisors enact legislation to ensure that new jobs generated by new commercial developments will go to city residents, "especially the long-term unemployed and under-employed."

These purposes, perceived as effectively supporting a controlled and integrated growth of San Francisco, would hopefully combat the current loss of small neighborhood businesses and affordable housing, the uncontrolled growth of highrises, the overloading of public transportation, and the increasing unemployment of our cultural and ethnic minorities.

The San Francisco Plan is a democratic one, intending as it does to leave "the drafting of ordinances to the legislative process in which all sections of the City will have an equal and public opportunity to contribute their ideas." Perhaps this initiative will appeal to a broad enough spectrum of voters to ensure its passage where previous initiatives have failed. We wish it well.



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## COIT TOWER ANNIVERSARY EVENTS

*July 28 to 31st:* San Francisco Urban Fair, Moscone Center. Vintage photos documenting building of Coit Tower at Pioneer Park and painting the murals. Historical talk by Marsha Jewett, author of a new book on the tower. Contemporary art exhibit.

*September:* Saturday morning walking tours of Washington Square and Coit Tower. Include lunch at Washington Square Bar & Grill. Co-sponsored by Shaklee.

*September 26:* A panel of judges will select from a group of finalists in two contests: San Francisco's Hottest Fireman and Lilly Coit Look-Alike. This is a benefit for the Coit Tower events and the SF Fire Department. More details to come.

*October:* The display of Coit Tower memorabilia from the SF Fair will be moved to the City Hall rotunda (see July 28 to 31).

*October 6:* Friends of Rec and Park will host a black tie evening celebration.

*October 8:* Anniversary of the tower dedication. The SF Fire Department's St. Francis Hook and Ladder Company will display historical fire equipment. Also on the 8th, a book signing party for Marsha Jewett's book on the tower and a reception for the artists who worked on the murals. They will come from as far away as Japan.

For further information, send your name and address to: Coit Tower Anniversary Committee, P.O. Box 330171, SF, 94133.



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Photo by Stewart Bloom

Friends gathered on April 30th to bid farewell to Charlie Starbuck, former SF Planning Commissioner, who announced he was levitating to the Green Mountains of Vermont. Telegraph Hill provided the "ballast" you see in evidence here.

## GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Tuesday, July 26th

Speaker: Jeffrey Lee, Director DPW

\$12.50 per person, including tax & tip  
6:30 p.m. Cocktails; 7:30 p.m. Dinner

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### NORTH BEACH REZONING

The efforts of THD and other concerned neighborhood groups to rezone the North Beach area from C-2 (commercial use allowed on all floors of buildings) to R-C (residential use only above the ground floor, except by conditional use, with existing commercial occupancies exempt), and to lower the height limit from 65 to 40 feet is at a critical juncture. Interim restrictions are in effect until May, 1984, by which time the Planning Department, Commission, and Board of Supervisors must consider and approve any final changes in zoning.

An organization called the "North Beach Improvement Association" has circulated a letter and petition in opposition to the proposed rezoning, claiming that "jobs will be lost, store spaces will be reduced, and more competition will be encouraged for the already limited amount of space we now have in the area." The sponsors of this organization, which is chaired by Sophie Lau, a local realtor, claimed support from several neighborhood business people who *did not know their names were being used to generate opposition to the pending rezoning*. Ronald Derenzi, manager of the Wells Fargo Bank on Columbus Avenue and former president of the North Beach Merchants and Professionals Association told THD that he did not intend to be identified with the North Beach Improvement Association's letter. We feel this is a purely self-interest group. It is not the intent of sponsors of the rezoning proposal to stop change or development in the area, but *to encourage it in a way that allows North Beach to continue to be a desirable residential and commercial neighborhood*. A number of neighborhood organizations have been invited to discuss and add support to the rezoning proposal.



THD residents can help by writing to the Planning Department, Attn: Robert Passmore, 450 McAllister St., S.F., CA 94102 in support of the application for rezoning filed by the THD and others, and by writing to the Board of Supervisors asking for favorable action on the proposal at the earliest possible time.

Meanwhile, two related matters are moving through City Hall. The Special Neighborhood Commercial District proposal would allow participating neighborhoods to tailor zoning to their needs, under a revised Article 7 of the Planning Code. Although we seek such designation for North Beach, this should not supplant action on our proposed rezoning.

Secondly, a bill drafted by Supervisor Quentin Kopp would not allow citizen petitions for zoning changes to automatically become the effective (if more stringent)

interim zoning. It would require the Board of Supervisors or the Planning Commission to act on such interim controls, which could differ from those sought in a citizen petition. THD opposes the Kopp bill.



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# DEPARTMENTS



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## DOROTHY ERSKINE MEMORIAL TREE FUND

She was constantly planting trees. Along the Montgomery strip, at the end of Chestnut Street, at the foot of Francisco are leafy glades planted by Dorothy Erskine.

But planting trees was only a small reflection of her commitment to Telegraph Hill and the city of San Francisco. She was a founder of SPUR, the San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association, and helped start People for Open Space. A key figure in the environmental movement before it became fashionable, she was a moving force behind the 40 foot height limit that has kept the hill humane and habitable.

Planting trees may have been a small portion of her gift to the hill, but the Dwellers hope it will become a major monument to her memory. Together with members of her family and Friends of the Urban Forest, the Telegraph Hill Dwellers have launched the Dorothy Erskine Memorial Tree Fund.

Fundraising for this special project will be coordinated by the Dwellers and all funds will be held by San Francisco Friends of the Urban Forest. Contributions are tax deductible and checks should be made out to Friends of the Urban Forest—Dorothy Erskine Fund and mailed to P.O. Box 330159 (Dwellers' Box #).

Starting with a \$500 Dweller donation as seed money, the steering committee headed by Dorothy's nephew, Tony Gantner, hopes to raise \$5,000 this year, enough to plant thirty trees. The money will be used to plant trees in public spaces in Telegraph Hill and North Beach.

Major projects in public areas such as reforesting the poplars in Washington Square or planting trees along the Kearny Street steps will be undertaken as funds allow. But the committee also hopes to encourage the planting of street trees throughout the neighborhood. Purchasing and planting a single street tree costs \$150. The committee will provide advice and assistance to individuals who would like to plant trees in front of their houses.

This is your chance to get involved in the greening of Telegraph Hill and North Beach. If you can help with a donation, please send it to the Fund at P.O. Box 330159. If you would like to plant a tree, send your name and location.



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## MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

—by John D. Dolan

In 1982 the Upper Grant Street Fair was dedicated to her. In 1981 she received a commendation from the Board of Supervisors. In 1978 she coordinated a benefit for A.C.T. at Macy's and a show at I. Magnin for Art Week. She has been on the Board of Directors for NAACP, the Urban League, and The Council for Civic Unity.

Who is she? FLO ALLEN.



Recently evicted from her home on Reno Place where she lived for over 10 years, Flo now resides at 150 Francisco. As befits a woman who helped organize the Models Guild (and re-organized it three times), her apartment is filled with paintings and drawings. It is also filled with a disorganized collection of pottery. Although her landlady lived upstairs, the eviction notice came through the mail.

People like Flo Allen don't complain.

In the 1960s she picketed Yellow Cab for its hiring policies.

I didn't ask and she didn't tell me how old she is, but she has, as the cliché goes, been around. She showed me photographs of herself with, for instance, Leotyne Price, Jean Varda, Harry Belafonte, Paul Newman and Earl "Fatha" Hines.

And Harry Bridges. Harry Bridges? In the 1940s Flo Allen was one of the only two women business agents for the CIO.

During the course of our long conversation, I asked her about her parents. Out came more photographs. Her mother, whose family hailed from Boston, was born in Oakland. She was a concert pianist, and from the photographs of her it was immediately apparent that Flo Allen's mother was also a woman of great dignity. Her father, born in Visalia, "didn't like working for other people." In the 1880s, his father didn't like the fact that his son Arthur (Flo's father) was not allowed to attend the public school for white children. A complicated suit followed, which ended with the closing of the inferior school for "colored" children. Flo, one of four children, was born in Oakland. "My father," she said, "was self-reliant."

So is Flo. She has modelled for virtually every important figurative painter working in the Bay Area. She is now Model Coordinator at the College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, where she also teaches a Model Certification Workshop, a class, Flo noted, that includes nude modeling, noteworthy because it is the only certified class in California that does.

At one point Flo mentioned she had "worked for the newspapers." "Flo Sez"



appeared in the *Oakland Post*, and—typical of her—she used her considerable influence to crusade for the hiring of black firemen.

“Why?” I asked, “do you belong to THD?”

“You sure you don’t want some juice? Something?”

I shook my head no.

“In whatever neighborhood I’ve lived,” she said, “I always wanted to be a part of it. I felt THD was doing a great job.”

In spite of that entirely legal but mean-spirited eviction, Flo doesn’t smoke. When I admired one of the many clay pots around her apartment, she gave it to me. When I objected she said, “It comes back to us in ways we don’t know about.” Principled, good-humored, beautiful, energetic, and witty—and involved and generous—another reason, I gather, why Flo Allen belongs to THD.

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## STREET PATROL REVIVED

Due to continued interest and rising crime occurrence, we'll be walking the streets once again in an attempt to deter crime.

The crime patrol seemed to work for us in 81-82. Usually armed with flashlights, whistles, and dimes (to call the cops) our groups of 4 to 10 patrolled the streets of our neighborhood on weeknights and assisted church bingo-goers to return safely home. Although we never directly stopped any crime, our presence in the streets made the neighborhood more aware of crime. And it is conceivable that crimes like grand theft and robbery, statistically shown increasing in our neighborhood today, were deterred by our presence.

In July, we will be having a general recruitment meeting where the walk routes, times, and participation will be explained in detail. Anticipate a flyer on this and please come to the meeting.

Answers to questions and further information can be obtained from: Dan DuPort, 397-9148, or Tom Havey, 391-5524.

## AN INVITATION

Piccolo Pub, a new fresh pasta restaurant located at 579 Columbus at Union, specializes in late night dining and Sunday brunch. The owners, Joyce and Doug Berner, wish to extend an invitation to all their Telegraph Hill neighbors to stop by for a drink on the house. Just whisper the secret word—*THD*—to Doug for your complimentary drink.

**HELP KEEP TELEGRAPH HILL CLEAN:**  
 When you see trash, **PICK IT UP!**

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Many many thanks to the Telegraph Hill Dwellers for their support assistance at my hearing at the Board of Permit Appeals.

Although the height and rear yard variance was granted, my concerns and those of the association were heard and recorded—at least in the file if not completely in the court transcription. First Jerry Petruzzelli, then Jane Winslow, wrote letters opposing the variance that are worthy to be framed! The legal reasons as to why the applicant *could not* meet the five necessary conditions that *had* to be met were so completely spelled out. Bob Tibbits's visual demonstration was excellent. His photos were worth a thousand words, as was his patient explanation of the character of our neighborhood. Nan Roth did a tremendous job of refuting all of the findings of the Variance Board.

I can only say "Thank you very much." Without your support and assistance, I would not have been able to make my stand in court.

With gratitude,  
Susan Romweber

## THE COLUMBUS STRIP

We hope you've noticed the new landscaping down the center strip of Columbus Avenue, from Green to Bay Streets. The landscaping will probably include a mini-park in front of the Cannery at Leavenworth and Beach.

The work is being done by the Department of Public Works under the direction of Mel Baker. This is the first city project planned by landscape architect Bonnie Ng.

Liquid amber trees were chosen by Ms. Ng because of their lively seasonal changes. Since they are deciduous trees, they will be green in the Spring and Summer. In the Fall, their leaves will turn a beautiful array of burgandy, orange and gold.

The perennial flowers are orange garzantias "Copper King" and white miniature agapanthus "Peter Pan Albus." The plants will be watered by an automatic irrigation system, installed as a part of the project.

Our thanks to the Department of Public Works for this welcome enhancement to our neighborhood.

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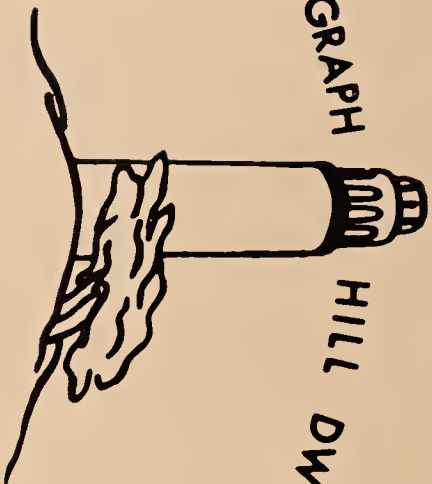


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